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REAL MEN...GO TO CHURCH WITH THEIR FAMILIES

By

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One may ask...what is the purpose and reasoning behind this article?
Answer...to present to the reader in a logical, clear and concise manner the benefits and drawbacks of church association and how it impacts the family unit and society.

Presenting my ancestors as good and bad examples, I have revealed to the reader the benefits not only to myself and my family of joining and attending the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints over the last 42 years but also, I have disclosed the pitfalls and drawbacks of not gaining and retaining membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

This article is my testimony of this church and how I arrived at my conclusions. This church is the Lord's true church on the face of the Earth and no other organization will help you get closer to your Heavenly Father and instruct you in the principles of the Plan of Salvation as presented to all of mankind by the Savior...the Lord Jesus Christ. Learn how families can be together forever.

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"BEHOLD, I WILL SEND YOU ELIJAH THE PROPHET BEFORE THE COMING OF THE GREAT AND DREADFUL DAY OF THE LORD: AND HE SHALL TURN THE HEART OF THE FATHERS TO THE CHILDREN, AND THE HEART OF THE CHILDREN TO THEIR FATHERS, LEST I COME AND SMITE THE EARTH WITH A CURSE. MALACHI 4:5-6

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INTRODUCTION

One may ask...what is the purpose and reasoning behind this article? Answer...to present to the reader in a logical, clear and concise manner the benefits and drawbacks of church association and how it impacts the family unit and society.

I have been wrestling with this topic for several years. I have been procrastinating concerning this subject due to the sensitive subject matter. Using my family as examples for good and bad behavior is a dear and precious undertaking. Especially, when my family represents most of the negative elements of this discussion.

Many of you will think I have written this article directed at you. This is not the case. Apparently, this article was written for all those fathers in the world who are actively engaged in their family's temporal lives but are lacking as good examples in their family's spiritual lives.

After raising two sets of families 9 years apart comprising of six children over the last 40 years, I have made some observations concerning positive Christian influences as part of our lives verses living without such influences.

A DIFFICULT TASK AT BEST...

My wife and I have been actively engaged in a project for several years, which has developed and evolved into an extremely difficult task. At the time of its conception, it seemed like a small easy matter to accomplish, but after a five-year process and still counting, we find it very hard to complete.

It was a simple idea, we made the decision to scan all of our family pictures and categorize them by the houses in which we lived. This would give us a chorological order to the pictures and cover the lives of our children from the time of their birth until they left our home and had families of their own.

As you scan each individual picture, which amounted to thousands, you begin to live each memory each of those pictures represents. This is the hard part we were not prepared for. Each precious picture recalls family memories, which cannot be relived including events, places and fun times that are gone forever.

We have scanned thousands of these "memories" and our goal was to copy them to a cd and distribute them to each of the six children and numerous grandchildren so that ALL would have a complete set of the pictures and events of their youth and their siblings.

But, as I became engrossed in the work, eagerly scanning picture after picture, I began to slow down with the scanning as I have watched as Bonnie has scanned pictures and she too, has slowed down in her resolve.

What we were not prepared for was the flood of memories that has engulfed us as we scan those pictures. We were not ready for those memories to tug on our heartstrings and evoke emotions that have long lain dormant. This, we were not prepared to handle.

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I Now Know Why...

This subject is extremely sensitive material to older people who have had children.

Many times I have seen other women...especially mothers not wanting to “let go” of their children, clinging on to them well into their children’s adult life. They still think of their children as little dependant children.

This is a direct result of the parent “losing” their small child to adulthood and longing for a return to those days when they were needed as they were once needed as a parent.

When Bonnie and I would take our children to church, all dressed up in their best and finest attire. The family procession, of Bonnie and myself with baby in tow and 5 other children all conducting ourselves with proper attitude and respect, marching down the hallway to the chapel with reverence and dignity. Other members would watch and would make a comment to us on what a great family we had.

When we would go to the store or take a family outing, strangers would stop and comment and say, “You have a real nice family there.” I always smiled and thanked them and made a flippant remark like, “Yea, we beat them every night.”

These comments happened so often, I always thought it was strange they should even comment. I knew I had a great family and I didn’t understand why they had to make a remark and state the obvious. It really didn’t matter where we were; at church, in the store, shopping, it was always the older ones who would take notice and make those comments.

As a young father, I always felt uncomfortable about their remarks and I didn’t understand their motivation...until I became a grandfather, then and only then did their comments strike home and ring true.

Now in my 60’s, with all my children grown and have left the roost, I find myself looking at young families and commenting to the parents on what a fine family they have. I realize how strange I must appear to them as others appeared strange to me when I was young, but **I now know why** all those people had commented to me about my family...they missed their own families!

Seeing a young family with happy parents and joyful children brings back memories of their own families and the void in their lives caused by the departure of their children.

As the children leave the nest, the parents feel they have been “fired” from the most important job they ever had...parenthood.

We as ex-parents, realize this is the natural order of things, for children to grow up and leave the home, but right when we get this parenting thing down and get good at it and somewhat under control, we are no longer needed as a parent.

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Of course, many would say...sometimes the child or children come back home to live and even as adults they need parenting and guidance, but I am not referring to those exceptions.

I am referring to the emptiness in one's being without small and dependant children around to assist, help, guide and love.

After all the years of gaining experience in parenting, we as parents are supposed to shut it off and in our latter years, only think of ourselves. This is not natural.

After years and years of training either we got it right or we never did understand parenting, nevertheless, the children move out and leave and we are supposed to be done. What society gives us, as a substitute is...grand parenting. What grand parenting is...**a supporting role in the movie where we were the stars!**

Trying to fill this void of loss of children in an ex-parent's life is somewhat satisfying with grandchildren but not to the extent of actual true parental duties. All that we have learned and experienced being a parent gets put on hold and shelved and it is this lack of parental fulfillment that creates such an emotional roller coaster when scanning family pictures.

And it is through this scanning process that good memories of past events floods your senses and engage the longing desire to have more children and continue the parenting process.

After all, we are creatures of mistakes and it is through our mistakes we learn to align our behavior in a harmonious way with a society, whose majority of rules is based on Christian principles. If one cannot see, the divine plan in this process of parenthood, you are indeed spiritually blind.

As I look back at all those years raising a family and living my life, I can't help but feel, it was all a test or a preparation for bigger and better things to come.

Someone, somewhere, is keeping score and they just checked off the box titled ☒ parenthood and I feel I have moved on to another aspect of my physical, mental and spiritual growth called...old age.

And in this process of old age, one begins to reminisce and recall their youth, adulthood and the wonderful life changing events and experiences in their lives.

It is through these recollections of memories I can recall certain events of my life...as a son, husband, father and grandfather, who has lived and survived through it all, I can clearly see certain events that have had a positive and desired effect in my life and the lives of my friends and family.

One of these positive and correct decisions was my decision for church attendance. Although an unwilling participant at first, I found certain spiritual and temporal benefits that cannot be dismissed.

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MY SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND...

In order to show positive and negative effects of church association, one must know the background of this author.

This revealing glimpse into the history of my family and the families of those I have associated will reveal a pattern, which will be discussed in detail later in this article.

The most church influence I received when I was young, was when we visited my paternal Grandmother Rue Flavilla (**JOHNSON**) Pratt, whom lived in Bourbon, Missouri. These visits were on average once or twice a month.

As an adult, my parents never attended any church on a regular basis, my stepmother, was raised a Catholic, however, she failed to grasp their basic principles and through some bad life experiences, decided to remove any and all church influence, including God from her life.

My father was raised by a good God-loving-woman, his mother, my grandmother; Rue who made sure each of her children, as mandated in the scriptures, received proper training for their religious and spiritual development.

The Bourbon Pratts attended church every Sunday and were exposed to the dogma of religion and with Rue as the driving influence; she made sure they received the moral teachings of her prevailing faith, whatever it maybe at that particular time.

Concerning my stepmother's parents and their attendance, which was on a selective level, attending Catholic Church when certain events of the year necessitated such attendance, *i.e.*, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, etc.

Her father was a hard man, a policeman in St. Louis, Missouri by vocation and having been a policeman myself, I can imagine what events and horrors he witnessed that could have driven him to drink in excess.

Regardless, if it was his job or his responsibilities as a father and provider, this alcoholism led to an unstable atmosphere in the home and resulted in abuses that have left long-lasting emotional scars on his family.

I feel, experiencing those emotional scars has handicapped my stepmother's ability to overcome her youth and seek refuge in the arms of forgiveness from our Heavenly Father. She chose to be a woman of the world and living a life void of any religious training for herself or her family.

My Dad, on the other hand, had a good example in his mother even though his father was not interested in any form of religion. However, Grandpa Lum Pratt never stood in the way of his wife, Rue taking his children to church.

But Dad also carried emotional scars. After he left home at the age of 14 to work in the city of St. Louis, sometime later in 1945 he was drafted into World War II and served in occupied Japan.

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The events and horrors he witnessed during war, left scars on him and when he returned to his home in Missouri, he had no interest in religion.

Floyd met my birthmother; Delores Virginia (**BROWN**) in a bar in St. Louis. Delores's parents were divorced when Delores was 5 years old and with 2 children to support, grandmother Olga didn't take time for church. In fact, Olga spent much of her time working to support her daughters and in the evenings she would "go out" looking for a potential husband to help raise her children.

Many of you can read between the lines and you understand...looking in the local bars for a potential spouse to help raise your children would not produce suitable fatherly candidates. But, nevertheless, this was Olga's choice. And as her daughter's grew into adulthood they emulated their mother and they too hung around the nightclubs and bars..."looking".

Delores had no church association as a youth and this lack of basic moral training led to her unhappy life with various men, 3 husbands, 5 children and an addiction to alcohol.

INDIFFERENCE...

All three of my parent's decision; not to have any religious influence in their lives has resulted in positive and negative consequences in my life.

After analyzing their situations, using the luxury of 20/20 hindsight, the only positive impact on their families concerning their lack of religious moral teaching I can conclude, has been their **lack of prejudicial attitude** towards the different multi-denominational churches.

Grandmother Rue lived in a small town and oh, how one church despised a different denomination, and even resorted to violence against opposing denominations all motivated by revenue and a difference of opinions. I had read in the old newspapers the various types of violence opposing denominations imposed on one another. In Bourbon, an opposing church congregation burned down another denomination's church building.

Consequently, this hypocrisy in the religious community, concerning prejudices based on opposing viewpoints is not based on the teachings of the Savior. These actions never are undertaken based on his teachings; this hypocrisy exists because of man's inability to live the basic principles of the Savior's Plan of Salvation.

If my parents had been members of a church, they may have been caught up in this "we are right and everyone else is wrong" attitude and with that hypocrisy, done more harm than good to their children...possibly driving us away from church and religion altogether.

Unfortunately, as a result of my parent's ignorance, through their indifference and lack of religious education...to them all religion was religion. All churches were the same, all the people were the same and the Christian message as they interpreted...Christianity was oppressive and demanding and in their minds, they could not or would not live up to the Lord's standards, therefore why try?

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However, the most harmful aspect of this dominant attitude that prevails in our society...if they didn't understand the program, and they couldn't live up to the standards, then their children shouldn't try either because heaven forbid, what if their children found out what bad examples they were as parents, sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father.

Many ex-members of the Lord's church wouldn't dare take their girlfriends, boyfriends or potential spouses to their church because they are afraid of being judged. If their girlfriends found out how they were supposed to be living, then they might ask, why aren't you at least trying to live up to those standards?

FEAR AND PRIDE...

The last thing a parent wants to happen...is to be judged by their children and condemned as failures. Any type of failure; as a parent, as a father or mother or failure as a provider of any other aspect that we parents entertained during our tenure as parent to our children, especially **failure to be a good example**.

When we begin parenthood, the only guidance we can use as a reference is the examples our parents left us when they raised us.

We can read books, we can watch television, we can even seek therapy, but when trouble visits our families, we always fall back on what we had seen our parents do. This is why so many children when they become parents, sometimes state, "Oh no, I'm becoming my Mother" or they say, "I'm becoming my Father".

Even the Savior stated in John 8:38, "*I speak that which I have seen with my father, and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.*"

STARTER BODIES...

It has always amazed me, we humans, live a short time on this earth and yet most of us don't care about where we are going to live in eternity. They concentrate on their carnal lives, accumulating wealth, property and business successes all the things they cannot take with them to the afterlife or spirit world.

Logic dictates, if this life is temporary or what I call your "starter" body, shouldn't you investigate and become familiar with where you're going to be after this life? Shouldn't you check out your options?

When you apply for a job, don't you investigate the company and the type of job you are going to be required to perform? Yes, even to the point of preparing yourself for the interview by gaining some knowledge of the company and position, so you will be able to pass the tests and be acceptable to management and hopefully you will secure the position you desire.

Then how is it, the majority of people on this earth are not prepared for the afterlife? Do they expect to get the same blessings reserved for the faithful without doing their homework?

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There's going to be a lot of unhappy people in the next life. The old adage..."Everybody wants to go to Heaven, but nobody wants to die," says it all.

NEGATIVE IMPACT...

Now that we have talked about the one positive factor my parents taught us boys about religion...indifference, I want to address some of the negative effects their lack of religious training has caused.

Growing up in a house without a basic moral religious foundation, and not seeing my parents set the example of church attendance, instilled in me an attitude of "**If religion is so important, then why don't my parents think so?**" After all, in my young mind, I thought my parents were smart and I knew they were not stupid people, obviously they must know best and they must be right.

Consequently, any morality or fair play that we boy's learned was obtained from television. Luckily, the 1950's provided a majority of programming that reflected righteous moral lessons, at least the programs us boys got to watch. I cannot say this about the television programming of today.

Violence, sexual promiscuity and misconduct, foul language and hatefulness to name a few permeate the cartoons our children watch and their young minds are being "fed" this brainwashing. The very games for entertainment they play, leads to violent acts and violent consequences and when tragedy strikes, people comment..."He was such a good boy, how did he become a mass murderer?"

Our school systems were designed to teach fair play, citizenship and educate our young to become productive, loving and generous members of society. Due to the influence of evil-minded people, our school systems has lost their primary goals and is now void of any righteous religious moral teachings.

Evildoers have taken control of the laws of this land and under the guise of freedom, have removed simple but effective harmonious aspects beneficial to our young, for instance...school prayer. Instead, the system promotes the opposite of righteous moral behavior and concentrates on teaching our young to feed their carnal desires and unbridled appetites without discretion.

There is big money to be made in immorality.

The current public school system teaches our children to concentrate on the inner being; to develop and satisfy any and all desires, even at the expense of others, to seek truth within ourselves and above all, "do our own thing".

Unfortunately, being tossed by every whim and fancy of the world has the effect of teaching our youth, whatever, they decide to do is ok...as long as they don't break laws or get caught. They live carefree, irresponsible and self-centered lives dedicated to the pleasure of self and indulging in any and all pleasures this world has to offer. They call it "fun".

And how do I know this? Because, I was a poster child for my generation and was taught, "do your own thing"...there are no consequences.

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One of the main points of difference between the world's way of life and the Lord's way of life is under the world's point of view, they want you to focus on oneself and get all you can for yourself and don't let others or anything stand in your way.

Under the Lord's way of life, he asks us to work together and help one another overcome the trials, tribulations, pitfalls and snares preventing one's happiness in this world and working together **all** can enjoy a better life.

Unfortunately, those of us who adhere to the higher calling have to live with those who subscribe, to their baser instincts.

MY YOUTH...

Other than the little visits to grandmother's Pentecostal Church at Bourbon, it wasn't until I reached my 10th or 11th year my parents decided they wanted us boys to go to Sunday school.

As I look back at that time, I wonder if my brothers and I were beginning to reap the harvest of our non-religious training and started to exhibit signs of hostility and disobedience towards our parents and/or society.

I have found as an adult, when children start to exhibit the negative aspects of the world in which they were raised, parents panic and then and only then do they start to consider religious moral teachings as an answer to "straightening" out their wayward children. Later in my life, this was exactly the case with my children.

Living back in Florissant, Missouri, in 1958-1959, as a 10 or 11 year-old-boy, I was offended that my parents thought it necessary to take us to Sunday school at a church they didn't even attend!

I remember this new and strange ritual; where we dressed up in our good clothes and our parents one or the other, drove us to a Baptist Church on Lindbergh Road. They would drop us off and pick us up when the services were over.

The most vivid events I remember about that Baptist Church...we made crafts in Sunday school and not much else. I remember asking a question about God and they told me that I would find out about that later...after I died. I always thought, how strange that I had to wait for an answer until I died and they did not know the answer, and they were supposed to be the experts! I was not impressed!

A few months after attendance, the Church leadership wanted me to be baptized, but I discussed it with my mother and deep down even at that tender age, I just felt something was not right about it and declined. I recall I was confused and did not understand baptism. And no one could answer or explain in easy to understand language the reason for such a procedure.

I think we boys attended that church about 3 or 4 times and then never went to another church and never with our parents...except when we visited Grandmother Rue, whom always made the whole family attend church with her. Good for Grandma Rue.

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I think she enjoyed showing off her family to the other members of her church and attending church with her, I think my dad thought this was a small thing that made her happy. Nevertheless, as for as my parents go, they were not interested. By example, their indifferent attitude towards religion became my adopted attitude. You know...the apple doesn't fall far from the tree?

Dropping your children off at church without attending with them sends a profound message. As a youth, I read in-between the lines and concluded the following...

- [1] Church is something you do to get rid of your children when you don't want them around.
- [2] Church is where a group of like-minded people meets to discuss subjects concerning the mysteries of God where they speculate and don't know the answers.
- [3] People attending church are not the kind of people that your parent's would like to associate with, but they want **you** to associate with them.
- [4] The messages found at a church concerning God is of no importance to an individual and therefore has no credibility.
- [5] My parents didn't understand church so; they don't want you asking a lot of embarrassing questions.
- [6] Do as I say...not as I do...rank has privileges.

Due to this lack of participation by my parents, my esteem for them was diminished because I knew my beloved Grandmother Rue attended church and she was a saint to me. Therefore, if my Grandmother attended church and I loved her, she was kind, generous, loving and the type of person I admired, then my parents who did not attend church obviously were flawed and lacked credibility and were not wise people.

MY TEEN YEARS...

I was privileged, with a good home and my father was very successful and provided a good income for the family, in fact, I would say he earned an above average income because we always dressed in fine clothes and ate at good restaurants and took many vacations and always had plenty of resources to meet our family's needs.

But, sometime in my 13th or 14th year, an event would take place that changed my life.

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING...

By 1961 or 1962, we were living in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where Dad was the president of the Atlas Life Insurance Company. It was customary on Saturdays, Mom or Dad would drop us boys off at the movie theatre downtown, which was about 5 miles away, and we boys would get to see the Saturday matinees.

But on this one particular occasion, Mom dropped me off alone to see a movie called, "**The Last Days of Sodom and Gomorrah**" (1962) starring Stewart Grainger. The plan was for me to walk home after the movie and I was supposed to follow the railroad tracks next to the theatre out of downtown, which led right by my house at 920 South Paulton Avenue.

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As I watched this movie, something strange began to happen to me. I was overcome with a force or power I later learned it was from my Heavenly Father to the extent that I trembled to the core of my very spirit.

Even though it was a movie, and I recognized it as a movie, I felt something I had never experienced in my life. As I left the theatre and began my long walk home along those tracks,

I remembered being overcome with love, awe and emotion and falling to my knees in reverence, I offered up a prayer and poured my heart out to the Lord. After several minutes, I felt comforted and at peace, I continued on my journey home, not quite knowing what had just happened to me.

Today, I now know at that young age I was having my first spiritual experience. But then, it was so overpowering I had never experienced anything like it before.

And like Saul of Tarsus, I became interested in religion. Not interested in attending a church but I started to read the Bible.

For the rest of my teen years I read the Bible periodically and being a composer of music, sometime during my twenties, I wrote a musical titled, "John, The Baptist." This profound love of the scriptures influenced many of my musical compositions.

Even though I read and studied the scriptures I was not really interested in attending any church. I can now see how my parent's indifference to church was deeply instilled in my psyche. I extended my studies to include other religious works but I was not a religious man. I was a man of the world and conducted myself in thought and deed as such.

Many of you are maybe asking what the previous background has to do with the subject matter of this article... the answer is credibility.

Many authors write articles and books and you, the reader never knows what their experience, knowledge or background is concerning their subject.

By building a foundation for this article with my background, experience and knowledge, you are assured that I speak from personal knowledge and my work is based on fact and personal observations and not fabrication, fiction or wishful thinking.

THE EARLY MARRIAGE YEARS...

When my first marriage came along, I was not interested in getting married in a church per se. My first wife was raised Catholic however, her family life paralleled my stepmother's life with an alcoholic father, abusive behavior and violence.

However, when it came time for marriage, we agreed we would be married in a non-denominational church, which we were. Neither one of us were interested in any church or religion.

After a son, we decided our three-year marriage lacked compatibility on a multitude of levels; experiences, common background, education and goals; we separated followed by a divorce.

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After a period of time, I dated and married my present wife, Bonnie. Bonnie was also raised with some Catholic influence in somewhat of a far, far lesser degree.

Bonnie's mother; Enid was exposed to the Christian Scientist organization through her mother. Enid attended the Christian Scientist church off and on with her mother; Hazelton and became a Christian Scientist member. Bonnie's grandfather, Fred, Hazelton's spouse never attended church or affiliated with one.

In contrast, Bonnie's father; Robert was raised in the Catholic Church and up until he married, he was an active member. After marriage, he didn't attend church much and Bonnie's mother attended the Christian Scientist church sometimes taking the children in their teen years.

This chasm in their religious differences, led Bonnie's father to live and work in a different city and he would return home and visit his family on the weekends. This was due to Enid's refusal to move away from family and friends and her religious affiliation. While in his work city Robert, got to attend his Catholic church with family and friends while his wife attended her Christian Scientist church in her city. This arrangement continued most of Bonnie's youth and teen years.

If the Catholic Church were more open-minded concerning divorce, I am sure this marriage would have been dissolved years before.

Now, I will tell you a secret, the reason why the Catholic Church was so strict concerning divorces, was because they believed that once you married...you married forever. In other words they felt marriage was something you did as a commitment for **eternity**. More about eternal marriage later.

Bonnie has told me her parents sent her and her siblings to a non-denominational church when they were young and she added her parents never attended church together or as a family. However, overall Bonnie and her siblings were without any serious religious background or foundation and this led to "free" spirited individuals following the ways of the world...just like me.

At the age of 17, Bonnie married and had three children during the early 1960's, those children also had no religious background and they as a family never attended church.

Sometime after the first divorce, Bonnie married again and although this husband was raised Catholic, when he moved from his home he attended an Evangelical church with his sister-in-law. He never attended church with Bonnie or the children.

Which brings us to Bonnie's most successful and rewarding marriage...me. When I met Bonnie she was holding down 3 separate and distinct jobs; managing the apartment complex of 3 buildings with 20 apartments her parents owned, selling real estate for Gundaker Real Estate Company and working evenings in a Mexican Restaurant as a waitress.

I was so impressed with her dedication to her family and working all those jobs supporting three children on her own without government assistance, I guess you could say I was smitten with her.

Not to mention she was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen, let alone lucky enough to date.

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After a few years of courtship, with Bonnie's three children from her first marriage, we married and I took a position with a manufacturing company to sell industrial chemicals to public and commercial markets and we relocated to Springfield, Missouri. During our Springfield 10 year tenure, three more children joined our family.

LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL...

Being married to Bonnie, were my most productive creative years...musically. Bonnie was my muse and inspired me to write many songs. As I had previously mentioned, I wrote a play called "John, the Baptist" based on the life of John the Baptist and before I could complete my play, I had to research for the material at various libraries in the St. Louis area.

Fortunately, there were many Catholic libraries and Lutheran Libraries with volumes of material on the life of John the Baptist beyond the biblical version.

While preparing for the background on the life of John The Baptist, I became familiar in detail with the New Testament and was showing an interest in all things supernatural and spiritual. I read everything I could on Edgar Cayce and UFO's and all other types of extraterrestrial and spiritual works.

I prided myself in knowing more about the Bible and other "worldly" supernatural things, including astrology than any other person I knew. I became quite proficient in projecting and diagramming astrological natal charts and was a hit of the parties I attended, predicting and explaining behavior patterns of those in attendance. I had purchased a complete set of Ephemeris books and could produce natal charts for people who were born anyplace and anytime in the world.

I was having fun and didn't know that my life was about to change when my Uncle Roger, (Roger Lee Boehner married my Aunt Anna Delores "do" (**BEDNAREK**), sister to my step-mother,) whom had instructed me in astrology, introduced me to a new book and a new way of thinking.

Uncle Roger was an interesting fellow, he worked for Crown Zellerbach Manufacturing Company on Brown Road in St. Louis running an extruder machine and I even worked there during summer jobs. Uncle Roger not only was a weight lifter and had a great physical build but he also was into spiritual, ancient civilizations and religious things but not a religious man.

In my early 20's he gave me a book called "**The 12th Planet**" by Zecharia Sitchin. I began to read this book and all of a sudden it was as if my understanding began to expand and new information was taking residence in my mind.

This led me to Mr. Sitchin's other books and one especially potent..."**Genesis Revisited: Is Modern Science Catching Up With Ancient Knowledge?**" In this book, as I recall, through Sumarian ancient writings Mr. Sitchin found detailed descriptions of the Adam and Eve events. I found many of the world's mysteries could be explained in his books.

As I read as many of his works as I could possibly get, I became very knowledgeable concerning ancient astronauts and space travel.

REAL MEN...GO TO CHURCH WITH THEIR FAMILIES

BY Floyd Thomas Pratt F.H.C., M.A.G.I. 2015

Today, as I watch Stargate, the television series, I see many of Mr. Sitchin's ideas and ancient translations depicted in their television plots.

Unknown to me, all this knowledge of other worldly things was about to merge...changing my life forever.

Reading those books enlightened me to the extent, my thoughts expanded to higher and higher levels of understanding and had no boundaries.

They inspired me in my music and I even wrote a song, "Metamorphosis" concerning a person who is sitting inside a makeshift pyramid in his home and has an out-of-body experience.

I began my religious studies into the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Scrolls and other ancient and various Gnostic Gospels.

I remember one day I wrote a song asking the Lord..."is this all there is?" You grow up, have a family, have children, eat and sleep and then die...is this all there is to life?

As my mind soured through the universe looking for answers, events back on earth were going to take a different turn, bringing my mind back to reality hitting the ground with a thud.

Or, to put it another way, the Lord heard my cries for help and he answered.

THE LORD COMES KNOCKING...

Our oldest daughter was going through that rebellious stage in her life where all wisdom rested with her and none with her parents. We have all been there; it's called the teenage years.

She had been getting into various trouble, nothing serious, but one day when I returned home from work; she had set a vacant field next to our apartment complex on fire.

We saw the fire trucks and the commotion and after things settled down, Bonnie came to the realization...

"All her children...including ours were in need of some moral and religious teaching."

This was not a light decision on her part. After she informed me she wanted her children to attend church and get some moral religious training, my reaction was surprise...but indifference. In my way of thinking, after all it couldn't hurt and maybe it might even help.

As you can see, I had adopted my parent's attitude concerning religion and to my way of thinking it was ok for you but don't bother me with it. And history was about to repeat itself.

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A FRIEND'S GOOD EXAMPLE SAVED US ALL...

Bonnie was working for Tile Town Carpet City in Springfield and a co-worker named Verla was a dear friend and sweet lady. Bonnie had noticed Verla was always happy and in a cheerful disposition and Bonnie asked her one-day what was her secret?

Verla replied it was her religion. Bonnie inquired concerning her religion and Verla gave her a copy of the Book of Mormon.

Bonnie read excerpts from this book unbeknownst to me and returned it to Verla and said, "I have read it...now what?" Verla contacted some of her missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Bonnie made an appointment with them.

Bonnie informed me the missionaries from Verla's church were coming over to talk to her and the children about Verla's church, but as usual, I was indifferent and not interested.

In my pride, I felt, I had read the scriptures and studied the Bible and had been to half a dozen churches and always felt they were hypocrites and all they wanted was money. I did not believe or feel comfortable with any of the churches and always felt their rigid inflexible dogma was foolishness.

I had read the scriptures and it appeared to me these people though they professed to be Christian and taught Christian principles, shouldn't be judging other people who were not living these principles.

What I had seen in these churches, were people who talked a good Christian game but didn't really **live** the concepts or practice these principles in their daily lives. In other words...I felt they were **all** hypocrites.

THE MISSIONARIES...

The missionaries arrived, I was not interested in their message and I sat in the living room and read a book, while they occupied the kitchen with my family. My attitude was church for the kids could do no harm after all I was sent to church when I was young and look at me, I was doing alright without it.

My first impression of the missionaries was "What strange men they are". They rode bicycles and dressed in white shirts with ties and traveled always two by two. They were well groomed and had a pleasing manner, not like the other young people of the world in the mid-1970's at that time.

After their meeting, they explained to Bonnie they had 7 lessons concerning their church and set up another appointment the following week for the next lesson.

A week later, upon their second visit, from the living room, I overheard some of their words concerning the second lesson and they mentioned God had created "worlds without end." This interested me and made me perk up due to my extensive reading and research concerning ancient writings.

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This was indeed a strange message to be coming from church missionaries, since most if not all the other church's taught this planet was the only planet of God's creation that had people on it. I was intrigued. I stuck my head around the corner in the kitchen and they invited me to come and sit with them.

METAMORPHOSIS...

I felt no condemnation from them for not attending their previous lesson and they were courteous, kind and respectful in a manner I found pleasantly surprising.

As I listened to their message they showed us a filmstrip called "Christ in America" and explained how the Savior had visited the inhabitants of Central America after his resurrection in Jerusalem.

As they spoke, this was all new information to me. Yes, even I, who had read so many books and amassed so much knowledge about the earth and the heavens...I was fascinated.

As they spoke, I thought, how could these your men of 19-20 years of age, know all this information when most men their age lack any form of wisdom? They spoke with authority and opened not only my mind with their words but my heart.

They went on to explain many more things but when they explained the Holy Temples and the purposes thereof; a strange and wonderful feeling came over me. A strange old feeling I had only experienced once before.

All of a sudden, I was burning up inside...my body was on fire; my whole body began to sweat. My body felt like it was burning from the inside out and I became very uncomfortable. I reached up to my collar and pulled the collar away as if to let some of the heat out and turned to the missionaries and asked, "Is it hot in here?"

They stated this was the Holy Ghost testifying to me the truthfulness of this gospel. I could not deny their answer because I had never felt like this before and had no answers.

The spiritual event on the railroad tracks in my youth was similar but not as intense to this degree.

I turned and looked at everyone else in the room, at the table and everyone looked very comfortable and I asked if they were hot and they stated my face was sweating and had turned red and they didn't know what I was talking about.

After giving me a Book of Mormon, I continued to sit in on each of the subsequent lessons and during the following week began reading the Book of Mormon. It was as if the words on the pages leaped out at me and became a true living depiction of ancient Native American history.

The Book of Mormon I found was the history originally written on golden plates, of a family from Jerusalem who were instructed by the Lord to flee Jerusalem, their destination the cedars of Lebanon after eventually taking a southwardly route through the eastern portion of Sinai Peninsula.

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The Book of Mormon continues with the Lord's dealings with that family and others who joined their troupe and their crossing of the Red Sea, Indian and Pacific Oceans and settlement in South America.

It explained the origin of what we call the American Natives and their descendants covering a period of 1500 years of their history. The end of the Book of Mormon ends with these golden tablets being buried in the ground for a future generation to be found.

Then, this is where the story actually becomes amazing, as if it wasn't amazing enough.

A young 14-year-old boy, named Joseph Smith in upstate New York is shown by an angel, who happens to be one of the authors of one of the various books contained on those golden plates, where he had buried the golden plates and informed this young boy, he would be an instrument in the hands of the Lord in the latter days.

And what was more remarkable then all I have explained, the Book of Mormon challenged any individual to pray about what they had read asking the Lord if what they had read were true and the Lord would manifest it to them by the sign of a burning in their bosom!!!

What a **BOLD** statement? This book actually challenged you to read it and test the Lord himself, as to the validity, and truthfulness of what you were reading. How could they do this? Didn't they realize they were opening themselves up to scrutiny, criticisms and charges of fraud because what if the person reading this book never received a confirmation it was true?

In fact, their whole religion would be hanging by a thread waiting for a personal revelation from the Lord himself validating the truthfulness of this book. What a risk, what a bold statement, this could open them up to all kinds of criticisms and jeopardized their very organization **unless..., unless..., unless...** this statement **was** true and the living God, Jesus Christ himself would validate this book through the Holy Ghost to **any** reader who sincerely asked for confirmation!!!

I had already received my confirmation sitting in the kitchen when I first heard the missionaries!!! But at the time, I did not know what it meant other than what the missionaries had explained to me.

As I read the Book of Mormon, sincerely wanting this to be true and having an open mind and sincere heart, something started to grow inside me. Something so small as to be tiny like a mustard seed, something I never had before in my life... I began to build a testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and this gospel.

But hold on a minute, I wasn't sure this was really happening to me and I knew if I went to their church, to see these people, I would be able to tell if they were hypocrites just like the other people who attended churches.

So, we as a family in the month of December 1975 attended the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Days Saints in the Springfield, Missouri ward for the very first time.

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My purpose for attending this church was to dismiss them as hypocrites, just like the other churches but...I was not prepared for what I found.

OH HAPPY DAY...

As we attended the services of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, I discovered these people actually *lived their religion!!!* They conducted themselves with honor, dignity and clothed themselves in righteousness. They were the best examples of Christians I had ever seen.

Every little detail felt right and true and they served their church with respect and humility.

I can remember when I attended my Grandmother Rue's church when they passed around the offering bowl, that I heard people comment and murmur about how much someone had put in and how they felt the tithing contributor should have paid more due to their successful business or standing in the community.

However, with the Latter Day Saints, when you paid your tithing, you took an envelope from the container on the bishop's office door and sent your tithing and other offerings either by mail or handed it to one of the three men in the bishopric. Wow, what a dignified concept!

This way, no one except a few in authority, knew how much or how little you paid in tithing or if you even paid tithing at all!

As I attended the church, I discovered other practices that were in harmony with the Bible and these people were living them!

For instance, I found, no one serving in this church was compensated. Everyone worked at a separate job in the community and everyone including the Sunday school teachers were volunteers!!

This has always been a bone of contention with me, the clergy of other churches were paid from the offerings of the membership and sometimes they made more money than the very members they were supposed to serve.

How refreshing to see the leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints all the way from each member to the Prophet and President of the church himself earned his or her own living from outside resources. Thereby not burdening the membership for their sustenance.

This was another example of these people living in harmony with the teachings of the Savior.

After the Sacrament meeting, where the Sacrament was passed to the congregation, then several speakers from the congregation, gave their talks on a particular subject...then we were dismissed to go to various classes, designed to meet the needs of each individual.

The young children went to Primary, where they received spiritual instructions and sang songs.

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The youth went to their classes based on age and received lessons designed to instruct them on what being a Christian means and how to conduct themselves as such in the world in which we live.

The investigators, were people who had not yet made a decision to become a member of this church, were instructed in the basic concepts and beliefs of the church explaining how, why and what was the Savior's mission and how *He* is the head and leader of this church.

Only after the 13-week course, would an investigator be asked to pray about their decision to join this church unless...they felt compelled to prior to the completion of the lessons.

I found it refreshing everything, every decision; every act was based on personal prayer and revelation from the Lord. They not only wanted you, as an individual to have a personal relationship with your Heavenly Father, but they encouraged it!!! These people really *did* live the gospel!!!

After Sacrament, the seasoned members, adults who were already members would go to the Gospel Doctrine class and be instructed depending on the course year, a course on the Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon or Doctrine and Covenants.

Each year the church worldwide would have their Gospel Doctrine instructors take one of those books and instruct in detail the entire book. New insights were given to each course due to new revelation and additional revealed scriptures.

After this hour-long activity, then a very unusual and unique event takes place. The adult men are separated into what is called Priesthood meeting and the adult women are separated into what is known as the Relief Society.

PRIESTHOOD...

After opening exercises, songs and prayers, announcements and activities are conveyed to the general body of the Priesthood. The general body of the Priesthood was young men ages 12-18 and older men with no age limit.

The opening exercises could entail announcements about needing volunteers to serve in the Temple, volunteers to help someone move into or out of the Ward, announcements concerning Boy Scouts and their meetings, activities like social gatherings and any additional information that should be brought to the attention of the priesthood.

The Priesthood, depending on their age is bestowed on all worthy male members aged twelve and up. And it is the duty of the Priesthood to share with their families' any and all instructions that maybe of interest to their families.

What a pleasant surprise!! The men are treated with respect not only in their associations with other men, but they are revered and treated with respect in their own families.

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I learned, the Holy Priesthood of the Lord is divided in two separate divisions. The Aaronic Priesthood, which is for new members and our teenage young men and the Melcheziadiak Priesthood, which is the higher priesthood named after Melcheziadiak the high priest who Abraham of old paid tithing.

This higher priesthood actually is named the Priesthood of Jesus Christ but the Savior instructed the brethren not to repeat his name so, he authorized his priesthood to be called the Melcheziadiak Priesthood.

After the opening exercises of the Priesthood meeting, we are dismissed to our various classes. The Elders go to the Elders Quorum, (men who are usually under 50 years of age with young families), the Deacons go to the Deacons Quorum, (boys aged 12-13) the Teachers go to the Teachers Quorum, (boys aged 14-15), the Priests go to Priests Quorum (young men aged 16-17), and the High Priests go to the High Priest Group (older men usually over age 50) whose families have grown.

Within each of those Quorums are chosen a President and two Councilors, except the High Priest has a High Priest Group Leader and two assistants.

Each is instructed in various lessons concerning how to be better sons, husbands, fathers and citizens to their family and community using the scriptures and the Plan of Salvation as guidelines.

Emphasis is placed on being a good example in everything you do...especially to your family! This includes attending church with your family and taking responsibility for their physical, emotional, financial, mental and spiritual welfare.

I was overwhelmed!!! What..., how..., why...how long has this wonderful organization been on the earth and why hasn't anyone up to now told me about it?

All these years, up to this time (1975), I had never heard or met anyone or known anything about the Mormon Church. How wonderful!

But, as I continued to study about this great organization, I still had **old instilled feelings** burned into my physique concerning religion.

MY PARENT'S EXAMPLE...

After several weeks of attendance as a family, Bro. Sheldon, one of the Seventy, asked us all to be baptized and become members of the church. Bonnie and the children discussed baptism and agreed to be baptized, but...I was reluctant.

We liked the people, we liked the concept and we liked the idea, families can be together forever.

But, my old feelings of doubt, fear and indifference reared its ugly head, reminding me of what I had been taught by my parents about churches.

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This “new” church actually required its members to make personal binding promises and covenants directly with the Lord, many of these promises resulting in life altering behavioral changes.

If you were a smoker, the Lord required you to give up smoking, if you were a drinker of alcohol, the Lord required you to give up that indulgence. If you were dishonest, disloyal, a liar or exercised any other vices you were required to give up such practices and put on his countenance and become his disciple.

I balked, because I was actually afraid of changing and taking on new responsibilities and I wasn't too sure I wanted to give up my old comfortable lifestyle.

I wasn't perfect but at least I wasn't a smoker or drinker. But, I was addicted to caffeine and drank a liter of Pepsi a day. And caffeine was prohibited by a latter day decree or revelation from the Lord given to the current Prophet Spencer W. Kimball.

The Church leadership scheduled the baptisms for Bonnie and the children for the 20th of December 1975. As I attended this church, even though I knew membership in this church was the right thing to do, I still felt afraid of the change it was going to require of me...because this was serious business and I was taking this membership seriously.

I had already experienced a personal revelation as to the truthfulness of this church from the Holy Ghost and the truthfulness of the Temple ordinances. The more I investigated the more I became convinced **THIS WAS** the Lord's church. Therefore, you could not fake a testimony and membership in this church and continue to do what you had been doing before you were baptized.

If you accepted baptism and membership into this church, you had to convert and change your ways to be in harmony with the Lord's teachings and the Plan of Salvation.

In addition, I could not deny what I had felt and all of this “new” information this Church had taught

- [1] God lives,
- [2] The Savior is at the head of this church
- [3] And he loves each and every one of us
- [4] And together we can be a family forever...I knew in my heart these statements were true.

And most humbling of all, many wonderful and marvelous things have and will take place on the earth and the Lord wants me and my family to be part of it.

Unfortunately, hard habits and notions die-hard, however, with the Lord's help and with more coaxing from Bro. Sheldon, I remember he asked me this question, “Don't you want to be baptized with your family as head of your family?”

I thought about what he said and over a period of a few days, I asked myself this question, “Do you or do you not want to be head of this family and stand up and be a man?”

“Do you want to be a force of good in your family's lives and be a good example to the world or do you want to become as your fathers and grandfathers of old...indifferent?”

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I decided I did not want to become as my ancestors, for I had seen the terrible price extracted from their lives and the lives of their children due to indifference to religion. I saw wrecked families in my ancestry due to their failure of not living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, I made a commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and consented to baptism and on the 20th of December 1975 we were all baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the Springfield, Missouri Ward building.

After baptism, which is the physical manifestation of commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ by the participant with adoption into his family. I decided to commit myself to being the best representative I could possibly become to the Lord, his church and my family serving my brothers and sisters.

After we were baptized, this church through the Lord Jesus Christ offers their members something no other church can or will offer...the laying on of hands by the Holy Priesthood for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The “new” member sits in a chair circled by men who hold the Priesthood and all of them lay their hands upon the recipient’s head. A priesthood officiator offers the blessing and bestows the gift of the Holy Ghost upon the “new” member.

This gift gives the Holy Ghost a permanent residence as a constant companion within the member as long as the member acts in harmony to the gospel principles.

Don’t misunderstand, after baptism, all your old bad habits and problems you experienced in your life, which has been instilled in your spirit, over your lifetime, are still there but now, with the help of prayer and the Holy Ghost you have an additional power to help you overcome and eradicate these bad influences from your personality.

An example of Latter Day revelation, the church was instructed by the Lord long before our scientists knew, that caffeine was not good for man and the Prophet Spencer W. Kimball informed the membership not to drink caffeine drinks in 1976...years before the scientist knew caffeine was harmful for us.

As I began to learn my duties as a son, brother, husband and father, through church teachings, instructions, reading and prayer, I found, this is what I have been missing all my life and didn’t know it.

I also, in reflection, took a hard look at the lives of the people I knew and grew up with and realized, no one had told them about this wonderful church either. Surely, if they knew about it they would have joined because they also love their families! Right? Right?

Even if they didn’t love the Lord, surely they would have joined for the love of their children and spouses...wouldn’t they? Surely they would.

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THE HOLY TEMPLES...

As my education within the church began to grow and I learned line upon line, precept upon precept, Bonnie and I immediately after baptism, were called to serve in the Genealogy Library of the Springfield, Missouri Ward.

My family history training had begun. I started to appreciate my ancestors and the trial and tribulations they had to suffer and go through so, I could have the lifestyle I have chosen in these latter days.

I was particularly happy the Lord had prepared a way called the Plan of Salvation for us to be together forever as a family. By following the precepts the Lord had decreed and performing the ordinances necessary in the Holy Temples, not only could my family be together forever, but all my ancestors and their families could be together forever.

As I grew in knowledge of the gospel and attended church with my family, I began to see a change in them and myself.

THE CONTINUING METAMORPHOSIS EFFECT...

I noticed, by associating with people who lived a higher Christian law and lifestyle, I no longer felt it necessary to use profanity to express myself.

By understanding what the Lord requires of his Priesthood, I discovered I no longer felt I had to rule my household with an iron fist as I had seen my father do. I no longer felt I had to rule my household through fear and intimidation.

I also discovered always checking my behavior in thought and deed led to a more harmonious relationship with other family members.

Granted these changes did not happen overnight, but it took years to eradicate the old bad influences from my character and incorporate these new soft, loving, kind teachings of the Savior.

Before my baptism, I would tolerate non-believers and people who lived by the world and not have any qualms concerning their behavior because I really didn't care what they did or whom they did it to. Now, it became a serious problem when I knew the correct way to conduct myself and after sharing with them this knowledge, they were not interested in changing from their old ways.

I discovered Heavenly Father didn't stop loving us after the Old Testament but actually has been watching and guiding us all these years and through the Prophet Joseph Smith he restored his church and through revelation to his children, he has restored saving principles that had been taken away from the earth due to man's iniquities.

I discovered through prayer and obedience to these saving principles, the Savior became my buddy, my best friend, not only did he answer prayers, but also bestowed blessings upon my family and extended family.

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I witnessed as blessings began to extend to my relatives by association. I began to see my parents receiving blessings they could not explain. I saw my business dealings began to prosper and I started to achieve financial success.

The people I used to call my friends began to be replaced with my church friends who after a long association became my family. In my opinion, my church family was an eternal association and if we were faithful and obedient to the teachings of the Savior, we would fellowship together after this life.

I began to assume a responsible, leadership role in my family, business and community offering guidance without force, threats or intimidation but led by example with patience, love and a genuine interest in their welfare.

I was so excited about this newfound way of life, I had actually found the Lord's true church on this earth, I wanted to share it with the whole world. I wanted everyone to share in the blessings I had discovered so I began to present my new church to family and friends.

As I excitedly explained the principles of the gospel to my family and friends, I was shocked to see they thought it was nice for me but they couldn't care less. They didn't even want to investigate this wonderful church and wanted to remain in their old worldly ways.

I couldn't understand why they wouldn't want to embrace the Lord's church and enjoy in fellowshiping with the Saints. I learned the true meaning of long suffering. Even though I couldn't get them interested in our church I never gave up on them and working with my family as missionaries we did have our successes.

Through church membership, I also saw, a change in my wife. Where she was aggressive and overwhelmed with the responsibility of raising 6 children, she welcomed my help as I took more interest in assisting her in raising our family in righteousness.

We believe, when couples are married in the Holy Temples of the Lord for not only this time we have on earth, but also this binding marriage covenant continues after death in the spirit world, I noticed a change in me. After being sealed by the authority of Jesus Christ in the Holy Temple to my wife for time and eternity, the ceremony alone, changed my attitude towards my family.

In the past, through worldly eyes, I considered my wife as a partner that could be changed if we didn't get along. I could drop her at my leisure and seek another anytime...just as the world teaches.

But, after our Temple marriage, I realized she was a handmaiden of the Lord and a helpmate for me and together we can help each other attain the Celestial Kingdom, where our Heavenly father dwells.

As my eternal partner, together we can overcome any and all obstacles in raising a large family. I no longer looked upon her just as partner but now she was my friend and eternal companion because of the promises and covenants I made to the Lord and he made to us in the Holy Temple predicated on our obedience to his Holy principles and covenants.

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Also, in the temple, our children were sealed to us as their parents. This is for time on this earth and for eternity. After the temple sealings, you look upon your children and grandchildren as eternal posterity to be cherished and loved.

Though they are young children and think as children do, they are actually adults in training and need our help and guidance to navigate this cruel, unjust world.

All these changes were not just evident in myself, my family began showing a kinder, gentler dispositions...especially, the older children who had not known the benefits of being a Latter Day Saint family when they were young.

The trouble and difficulty we experienced with our teenage daughter seemed to dissipate.

Though it took careful teaching and instructions over time, all of a sudden all of our children were actively engaged in Church activities designed to strengthen them and build strong characters with emphasis on leadership qualities and most important of all...responsibility.

From the very youngest age in our primary classes, our children are taught to have a personal relationship with our Heavenly Father and to accept responsibility for their actions.

This responsibility is manifested in thought and deed, including the very words that come forth from one's mouth. The Lord's church teaches we are here on this earth to help one another learn, grow and overcome the negative influences manifested by this world and lift one another up seeking a higher level of spiritual understanding.

In other words, we are to emulate the Savior in thought, action and deed in all manner pleasing to him. We are to stand in all places at all times to be a witness of him to teach, guide, assist all our brothers and sisters regardless of our own trials and hardships.

Each and every member is a missionary and selflessly carries the responsibility to share with others what we have learned and the blessings we enjoy.

FROM THE YOUNGEST TO THE OLDEST...

Even from the youngest to the oldest, all are represented in the Lord's church.

Each Sunday during the sacrament meeting, various individuals from the congregation would be asked to give talks concerning a particular subject. These individuals were selected from the congregation several weeks in advance and we; the membership would get to hear from our neighbors and friends concerning a particular subject.

The topic could be about tithing, faith, sacrifice or a thousand other subjects. Each member of your family would prepare their talk based on that particular subject giving definitions, scriptural references and personal experiences they have experienced concerning that subject.

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And if your family was fortunate enough to be asked to talk, all of the members of your family got to stand up in front of the congregation and represent their unbridled rendition.

Even the little ones would get to address the congregation. The additional benefit of this process helped to build courage and taught preparation in each of our children. Because, they had to research their subject and in their own words present their topic...this built character and leadership qualities.

My children due to membership in this church exhibited fewer arguments, less fights, less contention. Was it due to the morning and evening family prayers that we held every day? Was it due to the daily scripture reading that we read together as a family? Was it due to the once a week Family Home Evening presentations on Monday night? Was it having the gospel in our lives and living the principles? I would say it was all these things and more.

REDEEM OUR KINDRED DEAD...

As members, we learned the purpose of genealogy or family history research. We were asked by our leadership to research a minimum of 4 generations of our family tree and perform by proxy in our Holy Temples the ordinances necessary for their salvation.

Most religions of the world agree with the Savior's teaching; after we die and leave this earth the disobedient are sent to a holding place or "spiritual" prison waiting for the Savior to release us just as he did when his body lay in the tomb and his spirit went to free all those who had died since the flood of Noah's time. See 1 Peter 3:19,20

Through latter day revelation, the Lord has revealed our kindred dead, if they had not received the fullness of the Gospel in their earthly life, were given a second chance to hear the gospel and accept or reject the teachings before they would be judged.

Consequently, we as enlightened members are asked to research our ancestors, identify them, and through substantiated proof verify they are indeed our ancestors and on their behalf perform by proxy in the Lord's Holy Temples the ordinances we here on the earth perform for ourselves.

The Lord also promises these ordinances we perform on our ancestor's behalf are binding in the spirit world predicated on our ancestors accepting the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Hence, we are helping to redeem our dead. Many in the world who have never been through a marriage ceremony, our a sealing ceremony or a baptism or any of the other ordinances the Lord has commanded to be performed in our Holy Temples, have no idea the spirit of love and gratitude that is manifested in those Temples.

The feeling of love, harmony and righteousness permeates through your body, verifying just like Moses, you are on Holy ground. The Holy Ghost validates to your spirit this is true and righteous work sanctioned by the Lord.

This is why Latter Day Saints are so committed to this work...because it is true.

REAL MEN...GO TO CHURCH WITH THEIR FAMILIES

BY Floyd Thomas Pratt F.H.C., M.A.G.I. 2015

When Bonnie and I would take family vacations we went to the historical Mormon sites where we enjoyed a boost of spirituality. We went to libraries and visited long lost relatives and cemeteries all in the pursuit of our ancestors.

My personal witness by the Holy Ghost of the truthfulness of this work back in December 1975, had led to a 40 year pursuit for ancestral knowledge resulting in over 10,000 souls blessed by Temple ordinances and has blessed me with expert status as a family historian resulting in over 300 books, articles, stories and commentaries.

And I relate these blessings my family and I have enjoyed because we chose to read the Bible, Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price and the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and chose to be obedient according to the precepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE...

As we became familiar with our “church family”, we found a kind, loving sacrificing people who helped one another to achieve spiritual harmony.

The Lord has “set up” his church organization in a harmonious, organized and inspired manner designed to teach, instruct, educate and magnify the membership by preparing them for the highest realms of leadership in his kingdom.

Because all the leadership of the church from the Prophet to the Bishop to the Sunday school teachers are all volunteers, their service for their fellow man is based on love and the desire to help their charges.

In order for one to be “called” to a leadership position, the Bishopric, comprising of 3 men with different assigned duties; the Bishop, his first counselor and the second counselor asks the Lord for a revelation concerning the individual they are seeking to fill the open position.

They first select the individual from the available membership and they ask the Lord if this person is *his* choice to fill that position. Upon revelation, no one is called to serve in this church without the Lord’s blessing. This is very important...I repeat, **“no one is called to serve in this church without the Lord’s blessing”**.

After confirmation, the “calling” or position is offered to that individual asking the individual to pray about their decision before they accept or reject the calling. After the Lord confirms to that individual...it is his desire they serve in the calling, then the individual notifies the Bishopric and the individual and their calling is presented to the congregation for acceptance.

By a showing of hands, the congregation approves or disapproves of the appointment, then the individual is “set-apart” by the Bishopric by the laying on of hands and the individual is given a blessing to help them fulfill their duties in their new position asking the Lord to bless them in their new “calling”.

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Everything that is done in this church is according to the will of the Lord and with his blessings...a church of spiritual harmony.

Through the years, as I continued my membership in the church, I became acquainted with the Lord's gospel and the people who have been given the responsibility in these latter days to administer the saving ordinances in the Lord's Holy Temples.

Our family moved from locale to locale, state to state and at each city we were embraced and loved as family with whatever congregation we resided.

We found though the members of the church were not perfect, and made mistakes and sometimes unintentionally hurt feelings, the gospel in which they served was perfect and together as a spiritual family of the Lord, we could overcome any and all difficulties through forgiveness.

I decided years ago, these were the type of people I wanted to associate and wanted them to teach, educate and influence my family. After 42 years of church membership, I have not changed my mind and I know on the 20th of December 1975, when all of our family was baptized, we had made the right decision.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE...

As I have stated before, the Lord in his wisdom, knew, not everyone who has lived on the earth since the Garden of Eden would be able to hear the fullness of his Gospel and the Plan of Salvation.

He has decreed, individuals who did not get to hear the Gospel while they were in the flesh would be offered the Plan of Salvation after death. They would be taught the Gospel in purgatory or spirit prison and known to the thieves on the cross as paradise. I liken it to a railroad station, where everyone arrives after death and after an interview, are counseled as to where they should go and what they are to do depending on their spiritual station in life.

The Lord explained it this way, when we die, we cross over into the spirit world and are received by representatives of the Priesthood and if we were members of his church in this life, and attended one of his Holy temples, we would have been given certain knowledge in those Temples allowing us to leave the spirit prison and advance to the other realms or kingdoms.

However, those spirits, while on the Earth in the flesh, who have rejected the Gospel and Plan of Salvation are not given a second chance in the spirit world and are assigned to their realm, which they have earned.

It is the Lord's desire ALL who have lived on this earth in whatever time period, be given the opportunity to hear his Gospel and Plan of Salvation and accept or reject his atonement and the blessings thereof.

He also proclaimed all temple ordinances had to be performed [1] on the earth, [2] by the living [3] on behalf of the deceased by proxy.

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Consequently, he designed a method for the living to help those who have died before hearing the plan of salvation. These Holy ordinances are done by proxy in the Holy Temples.

The Lord never gives a commandment unless he provides a way for it to be accomplished.

He presented to the Prophets the following procedure acceptable to him;

- [1] First, the deceased needs to be baptized by the authority of the Holy Priesthood,
- [2] Second, they shall by the laying on of hands receive the gift of the Holy Ghost,
- [3] Third, they are confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,
- [4] Fourth, they are to receive the endowment prepared for them in the Holy Temple,
- [5] Fifth, if they were married on the earth, they are to be sealed in a special ceremony in the temple to their spouse and/or spouses,
- [6] Sixth, they are to be sealed as children to their parents completing the family unit.

Each of these ordinances has to be performed by the individual if alive or by a proxy if they are deceased in one of the Holy Temples by the authority of Jesus Christ. These are the same ordinances the Jews were performing in the Temples when the Savior walked the earth.

This is why it is vital we verify our deceased ancestors and perform these ordinances on their behalf, allowing them the opportunity to accept or reject the Gospel. They cannot do it for themselves and we cannot decide for them.

And why do we care, why do we commit, time, effort, resources and energy to this cause?

Because our ancestors did not love their families any less than we love ours and it is this love for them, that keeps us committed.

REAL MEN...GO TO CHURCH WITH THEIR FAMILIES...

Much of what I have told you will not fully understand. However, I have told you these things so you will investigate the Gospel and Plan of Salvation of Jesus Christ if you care where you will dwell in the afterlife.

If you love your wife and family, then you owe it to them to take them to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and find out for yourself and in prayer ask the Savior if these things are true.

It doesn't matter how much money you make, how many businesses you own, how many houses you have, how successful you are in this life, if you love your family...you will want the best for them by securing for them their place in the Celestial Kingdom with their Heavenly Father.

This is why I titled this article, "**Real Men...Go to Church with Their Families**", the benefits of attending this church with my family far outweigh the struggles and sacrifices I have had to give up.

REAL MEN...GO TO CHURCH WITH THEIR FAMILIES

BY Floyd Thomas Pratt F.H.C., M.A.G.I. 2015

It takes courage to attend church with your family and real men have and manifest that courage every day by giving up their selfish wants, desires, wishes and interests by placing their families first in their lives and serving them by example.

Gradually, by attendance over the years, I became a better person, a better son to my parents, a better husband to my wife, a better father to my children and a better grandfather to my grandchildren.

This was not accomplished overnight but gained by daily struggle against the entrapments for my soul in this world.

Warning...you can continue on the path you are traveling, or you can take control of your life and before it's too late begin your Celestial journey. No one has a lease on life...procrastination is your enemy.

At least, while you have some time left on this Earth, have the courage to investigate the Lord's Church and the Plan of Salvation before you reject the premise. Don't cheat your soul from the blessings of heaven due to indifference...don't become your ancestors.

Because of the love Heavenly Father has for all his children, and the love he has manifested over the years for me and my family, I have written this article as my gratitude to him hoping to get just one soul...just one soul of my brothers and sisters on this earth, to investigate, submit, commit and endure to the end the Plan of Salvation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and together, we can partake and enjoy the heavenly blessings promised for us and our families.

Floyd Thomas Pratt F.H.C., M.A.G.I.

18 July 2013

Revised August 2015

A Little Something About Your Author.....

Floyd Thomas Pratt F.H.C., M.A.G.I.



At the age of 19, Mr. Pratt embarked on a career in law enforcement. This experience gave him training in detective and investigative skills. Little did Mr. Pratt know, how useful these skills would be in the field of genealogy.

Floyd started his family research career in 1975 after becoming a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. His first calling as a new member was to serve in the newly created genealogical department or known today as the Family History Center in the Springfield, Missouri ward. This two-year calling gave Mr. Pratt a tremendous amount of experience helping others to research their families.

In fact, he felt family research came easy and required little effort on his part. In reality, years of reading and studying increased his expertise and he made it look easy to others. Over the course of several years, Mr. Pratt was asked by his church to instruct several family history courses. This experience established a deep profound love for family and ancestors. It was not uncommon for Mr. Pratt to spend 4 to 8 hours a day researching and compiling family histories in addition to his duties, as an entrepreneur in the insurance business.

The first major achievement for Mr. Pratt was a breakthrough on his Pratt family back to the early 1800's. Due to confusion with Pratt ancestors and not satisfied with just the direct line research, Mr. Pratt branched out to research all connected lines and allied families.

This dedication led to 50,000 individuals in his database and has achieved expert status for Mr. Pratt on the families of middle and eastern Missouri, eastern and western Tennessee and central North Carolina.

Concerning Mr. Pratt's style of research, he is a strong supporter of the "hands on" approach. When he took family vacations, they usually went to libraries, cemeteries, courthouses, National Archive centers, and visited family members in various states. He attended family reunions and obtained his material from the actual sources when possible.

Being a researcher of the highest degree, in 1991, Mr. Pratt created  **Pratt Publications**.

He began to offer to the public, a series of books titled, Pratt Progenitor Papers. This series of volumes are a collection of legal documents, stories, pictures and historical presentations concerning the families of Missouri, Tennessee and North Carolina.

The first three Volumes were released to the public in 1991 and were issued to 18 different libraries including the Library of Congress and the St. Louis Public Library. The next 11 volumes were sent to the Salt Lake Genealogical Library with 60 volumes scheduled for publication.

In 1996, Mr. Pratt created the  **Genealogical Institute** to further the education of serious researchers.

A Little Something About Your Author.....

The **Genealogical Institute** offers a series of educational materials to teach and instruct the novice as well as advanced researchers, procedures Mr. Pratt has tried and tested to be of great value in family history research. These courses offer “a hands on” curriculum designed to instruct in investigative, deductive reasoning and logical techniques for tracking your family history. Many have found a treasure chest of knowledge when undertaking these courses.

Mr. Pratt has taken the hobby of genealogy and has enhanced it into a science. Heavy on instructions concerning documentation, research procedures, alternative sources and common public records, these courses are valuable tools for the family history researcher. Mr. Pratt has been informed by researchers his material found in his publications are recorded as source validation for such organizations as the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) and the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).

Upon completion of the educational courses from the **Genealogical Institute**, the graduate is awarded the *Master Accreditation* of the *Genealogical Institute*. (*M.A.G.I.*) Written in easy to read format with detailed explanations concerning various subjects of interest to family history researchers.

Mr. Pratt's ability in family history research has amazed many experienced researchers. When Mr. Pratt is asked for help concerning their “brick wall” in their family research, his quick wit and logical mind rapid fires instructions and procedures so fast they cannot write the material quickly enough. Little do they realize, this knowledge has been acquired over 40 years of research.

In June of 2000, Mr. Pratt undertook a new and unprecedented task. Outside of Washington, Saint John's Township, Franklin County, Missouri is an old cemetery called the Johnson-Caldwell Cemetery aka; misnamed the McAllister Cemetery. This cemetery has many pioneer heroes and ancestors of various descendants from that region. Some of the inhabitants were born in the 1750's and arrived in the Missouri Territory shortly after the 1803 Louisiana Purchase.

Mr. Pratt recorded all the information off of the headstones including every person in the cemetery and researched each individual related to Mr. Pratt or not. 1000 man-hours and two years later, he published the book “**JOHNSON-CALDWELL CEMETERY OF FRANKLIN COUNTY, MISSOURI**”©.

Obtaining newspapers, legal documents, talking to ancestors and researching various sources for any and all information concerning the history of the cemetery and the inhabitants produced this master text.

What makes this book unique is based on several factors. First, it is the only book to report on each inhabitant, their birth and activities throughout their life until their death, including their ancestors, spouses and children. Second, this book contains a unique index, listing the individual and their father's name if known. This is extremely helpful when several individuals have the same given name.

Upon examination, professional researchers have hailed this body of work as a masterpiece and a standard in which all future research should be based. No one has ever produced a body of work as unique and professional as this publication.

As the years moved on, Mr. Pratt became concerned about his 40 years of hard research work of various family histories. After a serious heart attack in 2012, Mr. Pratt decided to post his collective bodies of work on a website making them available to all interested researchers without compensation.

A Little Something About Your Author.....

After careful consideration, Mr. Pratt chose the website www.openlibrary.org. "Open Library" is a repository of millions of digital books available to the public for free.

There are two or more ways to access Mr. Pratt's publications.

If you open the website as listed above you click on the authors label on the left hand side and type Floyd Thomas Pratt F.H.C., M.A.G.I. The website will open to his name, click his name and you will be directed to a listing with his name, picture and listing of presently 79 publications (2015).

You can either scroll the list or an easier way to reach his lists is at the following website...

<https://openlibrary.org/people/floydpratt59/lists>

If you notice there are currently 9 lists or categories of books, article, stories and commentaries attributed to Mr. Pratt's publications.

These "Lists" are broken down as follows not necessarily in any order...

Vital Text Series This section covers public vital records. Including marriage records, deeds, census records, births, deaths, probate and indexes to public records. The counties of Missouri covered are as follows; Crawford, Washington, Franklin, Gasconade, St. François, Ste. Genevieve, and Jefferson counties.

Pratt Archive Collections This Collections comprises of a series of books containing cemeteries, family histories, biographies and various books by individual authors. There are several sections with this group... **Cemeteries** contain documented census information for various cemeteries in Crawford, Washington and Franklin Counties of Missouri. **Family Histories** are a collection of historical books concerning a group of a family or family names.

CRADLE TO GRAVE (C2G) PROFILE The Cradle to Grave Profile (C2G) documents an individual's life from the cradle to the grave. All known research material concerning that individual is represented in a family group sheet format. These C2G profiles are presented to the researcher within a family group sheet detailing the husband, his spouses and all known children. Regardless of how many times the subject has been married, the researcher receives a full report on all known spouses and children.

The Pratt Chronicles... The Pratt Chronicles series or what we call a Cradle to Grave (C2G) profile on steroids, is an in-depth comprehensive biography on one individual's life encompassing all known events, including historical factors from the time of their birth to their burial. These events are comprised of current music, inventions, movies, family births, deaths, marriages, legal documents, occupations, military participation, pictures, maps, mementos, world history, US history and economic conditions as they occurred on a yearly basis.

LITERARY HISTORY SERIES contains rare books concerning family history written by other authors...many who are deceased. These books were bought over the years and now enjoy the status of a rare find in the genealogical library.

VIEW FROM THE MAST... Over the years, Mr. Pratt has found it necessary to write articles concerning observations concerning various family history topics or what we call personal artifacts. These reports, articles and short stories are contained in this section labeled...View From the Mast.

A Little Something About Your Author.....

Having a unique perspective from the top of mast on the sailing ship of discovery, Mr. Pratt has sailed through the waters of family history research for the last 40 years. These articles were designed to bring to the attention of family historians some unusual details he has witnessed during his research tenure.

Genealogical Institute M.A.G.I. Courses These courses were developed over the years to assist the novice as well as the professional in all manners pertaining to family history research. Written in easy to read format with detailed explanations concerning various subjects of interest to family history researchers.

Pratt Progenitor Papers Series This series is comprised of the famous **Pratt Progenitor Papers**. Starting with a known ancestor, this collection covers 2 or more generations of descendants. Each volume follows a particular individual and his descendants including children, grandchildren and spouses if known. Each of these volumes include legal and detailed information about a particular ancestor...many contain Cradle to Grave (C2G) Profiles. The order of reporting is as follows: 1st a Descendancy report on the primary, which is usually the husband; 2nd the primary or husband followed by all known wives, then 3rd the second generation comprising of all known children and their spouses, followed by additional subsequent generations of descendants. The **PPP** are light on speculation and assumptions, heavy on factual documentation offering research insights and suggestions.

ANCESTRAL FAMILY HISTORY OF... This book showcases a selected individual usually a living descendant, detailing their direct line ancestors as far as the research has been completed. This type of format is known as an enhanced pedigree chart. These books contain as many as 10 to 70 generations limited only by the number of ancestors of our primary individual. Whereas, pedigree charts list only the vitals on an individual, these books generate all known notes, articles, legal documents and if applicable, Cradle to Grave (C2G) Profiles on each and every direct line ancestor and their spouses.

When accessing Mr. Pratt's books on Open Library, click on the heading of each list and you will be directed to the books, articles, stories and commentaries contained in each section. Click on the title of the book or article you desire for a full explanation of the item with contents. On the upper right hand column, are the words "Read Online" and PDF. All of these publications have been uploaded to the Internet Archive Digital Library repository and you can access them directly at the following...
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If you wish to read online, click the read online link, the book will open and if you wish to download this item click the PDF link in the box on right. We suggest you download, giving you the opportunity to read and study the books, articles, stories and commentaries at your leisure.

We, in the genealogical world are deeply grateful to be associates of a man of Mr. Pratt's caliber. Through his research and dedication, future generations will benefit by his advances in the genealogical research field.

In addition we are thankful for the inspiration that sparks men like Mr. Pratt to magnify their love for people and history. We feel, with a lifetime dedicated to the genealogical pursuit of truth and knowledge, Mr. Pratt's accumulative body of work, will stand as a quintessential manifestation of this divine love.

Lewton Cole, Chairman
Genealogical Institute

Floyd Thomas "Tom" Pratt F. H. C., M. A. G. I. Pedigree Chart

1 page of 43 pages Pedigree

Page 1

Chart no. 1

